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**Wrestling With A Dream:** Hoping to form their own wrestling league are, from left: Front - Matt Chopcinski, 20, Randy Smith, 16, Jeremy Halfhill, 16, and Adam Bell, 16; Middle - Shawn Halfhill, 18, and Johnny Pack, 16; Back - Adam Wissinger, 16, Ryan Smith, 17, and Dave Wallencheck, 20.

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## Group Pins Hopes On Wrestling League

Brandon Wray - [Chronicle Telegram](#)

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**ELYRIA** - If you see these guys body slamming and throwing each other around, don't worry. They are professionals. Professional wrestlers, that is.

A group of local teens and adults have formed Elyria Hardcore Championship Wrestling, which they hope to turn into a viable local and regional professional wrestling league.

"We're just doing what we love," said Randy Smith, 16, a student at Elyria High School who has been wrestling his brother, Ryan, since they were young kids. "And we try not to hurt each other."

About three years ago, a group of friends that enjoyed wrestling and following professional wrestling decided, "Hey, we can do that here," according to the groups, which gathered on a picnic table in one of the wrestler's front yard.

"We've all been wrestling fans since we watched Hulk Hogan when we were little," Ryan said.

Three years later, as the popularity of professional wrestling has exploded in American popular culture, the league has about 14 wrestlers and holds monthly shows at a local gym.

Make no mistake - the wrestling league is not Greco-Roman wrestling with borderline starvation weight class-making stunts in too-tight tights. No, this is turn-of-the-millennium wrestling complete with nicknames, costumes, dramatic storylines and over-the-top staging.

They even have the beginnings of a rivalry with a similar league in Lorain that "likes to run their mouth about us," said Dave Wallencheck, 20, whose yard features the group's handmade wrestling ring.

The wrestlers all live in the city and include: Adam 'Bean' Bell, 16, of Elyria High; brothers Jeremy, 16, and Shawn Halfhill, 18, both of Lorain County Juvenile Vocational School; Randy 'Blaze' Smith, 16, of Elyria High; Matt 'Joker' Chopcinski, 20; Johnny 'Creeper' Pack, 16, of Elyria High; Dave 'Tank' Wallencheck, 20, an Elyria High graduate; and Ryan Smith, 17, and Adam 'Alan Jevic' Wissinger, 16, both of Elyria High.

The league is fun, good exercise, and a great outlet, they say. "It keeps u off the street and out of trouble," Chopcinski said.

The guys built a ring in Wallencheck's yard out of a trampoline, plywood, and indoor/outdoor carpeting with bungee cords for ropes. They say one goal is to save up enough money to buy a real wrestling ring.

One misconception of wrestling people often have is that everyone is Hulk Hogan's size, they say. The wrestlers say they have "big guys and fairly skinny guys."

Although the league mostly consists of teen-agers, it is "not kids playing around" or people trying to make money. The guys have fun, but they really want to make it a professional league, they say.

The league has held about 10 shows so far, aiming for about one per month at Samson's Powerhouse gym, 2908 Pearl Ave. Their next show is at 12:30 p.m. Sunday. Admission to shows is free in the hopes of building up an audience that so far is not there, the guys say.

"We just want to get our name and get people to come watch us," Jeremy Halfhill said.

The league publishes a newsletter and Halfhill developed a web site at <http://www.expage.com/page/elyriahcorew/>

Many of the guys would like to go professional and try to make it into World Championship Wrestling or the World Wrestling Federation, they say. They have even researched professional wrestling schools, learning that the closest one is located in Lima.

One member has sent a video tape to WWF owner Vince McMahon and asked for information on getting into the league.

The guys say reaction to the league from family, friends and others is mixed, with some thinking the league is an interesting idea and others more bluntly describing the participants as crazy. "My dad is pretty optimistic that we can get one going," one said.

Many said their girlfriends pretty much like to ignore their boyfriends' hobby, perhaps thinking that if they ignore it, maybe it will go away. But Ryan Smith's girlfriend was a little harsher. "Mine broke up with me because of this," Ryan said.

On "The Tonight Show," when introducing a wrestler with a "big announcement to make," Jay Leno said he had "never met a wrestler that didn't have a big announcement to make."

**Just like their heroes on TV, the wrestlers of the local league are fond of big, sweeping statements. "We're here to leave our mark on the world," 'Tank' Wallencheck proclaimed.**

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